

TRIBUNE
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Putting Up a Smoke Screen — to Keep Smoke From Young

Not since LeRoy Collins, president of the National Assn. of Broadcasters, impudently suggested to members of that august body that they bring under purview of the NAB code of good practices all cigarette commercials, has there been a more striking display of "self-honesty" than in recent action taken by cigarette companies.

Almost all cigarette manufacturers have decided to drop all advertising from college newspapers, magazines and football programs.

According to sources in the tobacco industry, about 40 to 50 per cent of all national advertising expenditures to college media can be attributed to cigarette advertising.

In his historic suggestions at an NAB conference in Portland in 1962, LeRoy Collins frowned particularly on television advertising that appeared to be aimed at encouraging young people to smoke. He added that broadcasters could no longer afford to ignore mounting evidence that tobacco provides "a serious hazard to health." The Tobacco Institute, however, in confirming the withdrawal from college publications of almost all major brand cigarette advertising denied that health was a factor in the decision. John H. Devlin, president of Rothmans of Pall Mall, said the move was meant to keep youngsters "from getting the idea that smoking is grownup and the thing to do."

It is difficult to say what will happen to the nation's college press when it is stripped of about half of its national ad revenue. Last year when a weekly college paper in New York, Main Events at the City College of New York, decided on its own to reject all cigarette advertising it lost about 75 per cent of its ad income and continued publication only through contributions from students.

Further, the use of male athletes in cigarette advertising has been rumored at an end. It has long been the contention of those critics of cigarette ads, that use of name sportsmen tends to encourage smoking in young sports fans. Needless to say, this step would immediately cut the earnings of sports stars who now earn thousands through posing for endorsement ads.

The uncertainty of it all is what aim the major tobacco companies will take in forming new ad campaigns. A revolutionary turn-about in advertising by cigarette manufacturers could trim monstrous amounts of revenue from all the ad media.

From the time snuff signs adorned barns throughout rural America, tobacco has been among the most consistently and aggressively advertised products. No one can forget the close association that existed during the thirties and forties between the "big bands" and cigarette companies. Benny Goodman and the Camel Caravan, the Lucky Strike Hit Parade, and Kay Kyser's Kollege of Musical Knowledge (Lucky Strike), Chesterfield's Glenn Miller program, numerous others, formed a strong alliance between music, dancing and smoking. Yet, somehow, despite the big band craze among the nation's young people, no one ever thought that sponsorship by a cigarette company of the country's favorite bandleader encouraged kids to smoke. Perhaps in those days there was too much discouragement of smoking at home. Nor were the rather childish premiums found in packages of cigarettes during the period — pictures of airplanes and baseball players — considered as a dangerous invitation to children to smoke.

It will be most interesting to note the results of the withdrawal of cigarette advertising from the college press. Should smoking decrease among college students, it will be striking proof that the ads have been paying off. Should smoking continue it can be readily assumed that the students are reading other newspapers than the campus variety.

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